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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8162
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0495
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0419
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0031
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0478
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2021
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0825
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000164

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MAURITANIA: POLITICAL ROUNDUP FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 22-26

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 161

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 156

[1](#)C. 08 NOUAKCHOTT 777

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Cornelius Walsh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: For the week of February 22-26, first reactions to the Paris Consultative Committee meeting emerged. Libya began a mediation blitz, sending a delegation to Mauritania, and receiving a visit by General Aziz in Tripoli. Muammar Qadhafi may also visit Mauritania for the Prophet's birthday. Rumors of tensions within the armed forces and the High State Council continue, while the Indian ambassador presented his credentials to General Aziz. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Paris Consultative Committee meeting: Several political parties and media outlets offered reactions to the February 20 OIF-led Consultative Committee meeting in Paris (Ref A), where the Mauritanian issue was passed off to the African Union and Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

[1](#)3. (C) Follow-up to President Abdallahi's son: As related in last week's political roundup (Ref B), President Abdallahi's son was taken by the Gendarmerie from his native village of Lemden (where he has been staying with his father) to Nouakchott to appear before a Parliamentary investigative committee. Subsequent to that cable, he made no statements to the committee, was released that evening, and returned to Lemden. LES have confirmed through direct contact that he is still in Lemden.

[1](#)4. (U) Libya mediation blitz: This week saw a flurry of activity from the Libyans. A Libyan delegation visited Mauritania early in the week, meeting with Aziz and visiting several locations in the interior of the country. The site visits were rumored to be advance scouting preparations for a possible visit by Qadhafi on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday (o/a March 9). Press reports have also reported on the possibility of a visit by Qadhafi to Senegal, where Aziz would meet him and Senegalese President Wade.

15. (U) Libya mediation blitz continued: Aziz made a visit to Tripoli February 25 and met with Qadhafi. There has been no official announcement as to the substance of their discussions. However, in contrast to the state-run media's usual lack of coverage on any aspect relating to the political crisis, Aziz's visit to Tripoli received top billing on TV Mauritania's nightly news broadcast and front page coverage on the "Horizons" newspaper. Other political actors scheduled to travel to Tripoli in the near future are Ahmed Ould Daddah and President Abdallahi (or fierce anti-coup activist and National Assembly President Messaoud Ould Boulkheir as his representative).

16. (SBU) Possible reshuffling at the High State Council: Several media outlets reported about a possible upcoming reshuffle within the High State Council to pave the way for Aziz's resignation 45 days before elections. Supposedly junta #2 General Ghazouani will lead the HSC in Aziz's absence, acting as the good steward until Aziz wins the elections.

17. (C) Tension within the armed forces and security services: Rumors continue to appear (often on anti-coup web sites) of supposed dissension within the rank and file of the military, and within the High State Council itself. One frequently mentioned animosity is supposedly between junta #2 General Ghazouani and junta #3 General Hadi. Furthermore, one media outlet reported that a young officer with ties to anti-coup partisans was arrested "in complete secrecy." Comment: The senior RSO LES, who has extensive contacts in

NOUAKCHOTT 00000164 002 OF 002

the security services and armed forces, has been unable to confirm the story. Reports of dissension and friction are not new (Ref C), and while there is almost certainly tension within the military and security services, the HSC continues to maintain a firm grip. End comment.

18. (SBU) Indian ambassador presents credentials to Aziz: The state-run "Horizons" newspaper reported on its front page that the new Indian Ambassador to Mauritania presented his credentials to General Aziz February 24. Comment: India does not have an embassy in Nouakchott at this time. However, India's presentation of credentials to Aziz marks the third time since the coup (after Thailand and Sudan) that a country has done so. Mauritanian state-run media always make sure to publicize any meetings with foreign ambassadors (even ambassadors who are unsympathetic to the junta), and milk each meeting for its propaganda value in portraying Aziz's supposed international standing and legitimacy. End comment.
WALSH